# Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

## Business Plan

## 2006-2007

**April 21, 2006**

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## Message from the Minister and the Director & CEO

The business plan for the 2006-2007 fiscal year provides the public with an overview of the major priorities and goals for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission in the coming year.

During the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the Commission will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and procedures to ensure that constant improvement remains a hallmark of its work. The guiding principle will continue to be providing the best service possible to Nova Scotians while making efficient use of resources.

The production of this year's business plan reflects input from both staff and management at the Commission. Working with all levels of the organization, the Commission has identified key initiatives which will help to enhance the strength of our province's many communities.

The vision of seeing Nova Scotia become a centre of excellence in human rights continues to motivate commissioners, staff and management.

Hon. Murray Scott, M.B.
Minister Responsible for the N.S. Human Rights Act

Mayann Francis
Director & CEO

## A. Mission

To reduce individual and systemic discrimination in support of a society characterized by equality. We value:

*Respect and dignity,* through words and actions in relation to all members of the public;
*Diversity,* recognizing everyone can contribute to our society;
*Understanding,* through education as a focal point for change;
*Credibility,* in being seen as independent and truly autonomous from government, and;
*Integrity,* in practicing what we preach and in serving as a model for government, other agencies and the private sector.

## B. Planning Context

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (Commission) currently employs 23 people and has four offices: a central office in Halifax and regional offices in Sydney, Digby and New Glasgow.

The Commission is an independent government agency charged with administering Nova Scotia's *Human Rights Act* (hereinafter referred to as "the *Act*"), a provincial statute created in 1969. Under the authority of the Act, the Commission focuses on the following core business functions:

- effectively resolving complaints of discrimination;
- promoting systemic change through education, training and affirmative action programs; and
- influencing the development of legislation and policy by government.

These core businesses operate in the rapidly evolving field of human rights and within a tight fiscal environment. Therefore, the Commission has continued to invest resources in ongoing staff training and seeks partners from the public, private and non-governmental sectors as it delivers its public education and consultation programs.

The Commission's Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has outlined a vision which sees Nova Scotia becoming a centre of excellence in human rights. Government, business, communities and private citizens would be actively engaged in promoting the values of respect and inclusion. Research and study on human rights issues would draw people from around the globe to Nova Scotia. The Commission plays an integral role in achieving this vision.

The Race Relations and Affirmative Action Division focuses on the core business activity of promoting systemic change in the public and private sectors. Since 1999, the Division has

implemented a cost-recovery program for its workshops and training services as it continues to focus on organizational change initiatives promoting equity and inclusion. Special training projects have been undertaken for staff and management with Convergys Customer Management, the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, Saint Mary's University, the Nova Scotia Community College and the South Shore Regional School Board. In the year ahead, the Division will continue to expand its reach with additional staff resources and promotion of its activities to outside clients.

In July 2000, the Commission initiated a multi-phase organizational review to look for more efficient and effective ways to provide service to Nova Scotians. Beginning in 2003-2004 and continuing during 2005-2006, the Commission incorporated the recommendations from the review into its business processes. This included re-examining time lines in the complaint process, updating policies and procedures, development of an online case management system and placing increased emphasis on settlement initiatives.

The focus during 2006-2007 will be moving beyond this implementation phase to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes. A variety of tools will be utilized, with feedback from clients forming a major aspect of the evaluation process. Development of staff through ongoing training will continue and limited recruitment based on the development of new job descriptions will be completed in the coming year.

During the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the Commission will continue to make the best possible use of its human and financial resources. This will ensure that the needs of Nova Scotians can be effectively met and the vision of Nova Scotia as a centre of excellence in human rights will be one step closer to reality.

## C. Strategic Goals

Goals for the Commission in 2006-2007 are:

1. To promote efficient, effective and timely resolutions for complaints of discrimination.

2. To promote systemic change by developing new tools and resources which support the Commission's mandate to educate organizations and individuals about the impact of discrimination.

3. To help foster the development of a more equitable society and fair workplaces by pro-actively addressing discrimination in all its forms.

While the Commission is independent of government, its goals for 2006-2007 mirror the spirit of the Provincial Government's goals by seeking to:

- promote fiscal responsibility and accountability;
- build greater prosperity ( N.B. - By enabling all Nova Scotians to participate in the economic and social life of the province.); and
- protect what Nova Scotians value.

## D. Core Business Areas

The Commission recently undertook a strategic planning process involving all levels of staff in order to develop a better conception of our core business areas and measurable goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Staff input in the business planning process is able to lead to a stronger commitment to service excellence and an improved experience for the public who contact the Commission.

As a result of the staff consultation process, the Commission's core business areas were revised for the 2006-2007 fiscal year to reflect the goals and priorities that have become part of the organization's strategic outlook:

*Effectively Resolving Complaints of Discrimination:*

- Delivered collaboratively through the Investigation and Compliance and Race Relations and Affirmative Action divisions.
- Attempts settlement initiatives at all stages of the complaint process in accordance with the *Act* and Commission policies.
- Investigates complaints of discrimination (approximately 220 active files in 2005-2006) and recommends options for resolution to the Commissioners.
- Identifies emerging issues and targets skill development for Commission staff in response.
- Establishes best practices for addressing systemic discrimination in collaboration with the Coordinator of Race Relations & Affirmative Action.

*Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs:*

- Involves the staff of the Race Relations and Affirmative Action and Investigation and Compliance divisions and the Office of the Director and CEO.
- Develops and maintains effective links with government, business, the legal community, schools, agencies and community groups to raise awareness of human rights issues and compliance with the *Act*.

- Undertakes communication initiatives aimed at increasing the Commission's public profile.
- Fosters social research on human rights issues and topics.
- Provides education and training programs in workplaces, schools and other settings such as a five-day Train-the-Trainer module for workplace educators.
- Ensures cost-recovery in service delivery wherever possible.
- Promotes opportunities for all Nova Scotians by working with employers to develop innovative agreements that promote diversity in hiring and promotion.
- Recognizes positive role models in business and the community who take leadership in promoting diversity.

*Influencing the Development of Legislation and Policy by Government*

- Led by the Office of the Director and CEO with input from the Race Relations and Affirmative Action and Investigation and Compliance divisions.
- Promotes consideration by government of human rights implications of planned legislative and policy initiatives.
- Briefs government on emerging trends in human rights at the provincial, national and international level.
- Conducts research on the potential impacts of government legislation and policy on disadvantaged groups protected under the *Act*.
- Builds knowledge and expertise within the Commission on trends, landmark court cases and key developments in other provincial and federal jurisdictions.

## E. Priorities for 2006-2007

Priorities identified by the Commission for 2006-2007 are:

*Effectively Resolving Complaints of Discrimination*

- In cooperation with Mi'kmaq and other aboriginal communities, complete the develop of an aboriginal framework to improve the services the Commission offers to these communities, particularly through the development of effective models of dispute resolution.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Commission's settlement initiative practices and its mediation roster.
- Ensure that priorities and strategic goals are reflected in performance management targets for staff and management.
- Develop a strategic plan for the Investigation and Compliance Division to ensure ongoing change management and quality control.

- Continue to evaluate the computerized case management system to improve the tracking and quality control of the complaint process.
- Round table discussions between investigation staff and legal counsel to enhance understanding of legal principles.

*Promoting Systemic Change Through Education, Training and Affirmative Action Programs:*

- Continue involvement with government, institutional and community partners to further develop linkages and forums for discussion and change;
- Complete the recruitment process for additional staffing resources for the Race Relations and Affirmative Action Division to augment the Commission's education, training and affirmative action programs.
- Continue to host an annual public forum on a protected characteristic in the *Act*, with a focus in 2006 on aboriginal issues.
- Invite faith leaders to join together at Province House for the Commission's fifth "Day of Reflection".
- Promote the value of practicing inclusion to the business community using the Commission's "Champions for the Workplace" program to identify two new champions during 2006-2007 who would host a breakfast for their colleagues.
- Continue policy research and development in partnership with external organizations in emerging areas of human rights.
- Complete the development and implementation of a Race Relations and Affirmative Action Division module as part of the Commission's computerized case management system.
- Continue to review existing affirmative action agreements by implementing new guidelines for the process of review.
- Promote the Commission as a source of information and resources on human rights and compliance issues under the *Act* for employers and employees in the public, private, educational and not-for-profit sectors.

*Influencing the Development of Legislation and Policy by Government*

- Complete the recruitment of a Senior Policy Analyst.
- Deliver presentations on trends and concerns to government and opposition caucuses in conjunction with the filing of the Commission's annual report.
- Work with staff of Treasury and Policy Board to incorporate consideration of human rights implications into the process for developing legislative recommendations for Cabinet.
- Continue to review the Act to ensure its effectiveness.

## F. Budget Context

See attached Schedule 1.

## G. Outcomes and Measures

See attached Schedule 2.

**Schedule 1**

| Human Rights Commission | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **2005-2006 Estimate** ($thousands) | **2005-2006 Forecast** ($thousands) | **2006-2007 Estimate** ($thousands) |
| | | | |
| Gross Expenses | 1849.0 | 2069.0 | 1993.0 |
| Net Expenses | 1843.0 | 1995.0 | 1987.0 |
| Salaries and Employee Benefits | 1380.0 | 1176.0 | 1512.0 |
| Funded Staff (FTEs) | 23 | 21.7 | 25.6 |

**Schedule 2**

| **Strategic Goal:** ***To promote efficient, effective and timely resolutions for complaints of discrimination.*** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OUTCOME** | **MEASURE** | **DATA 2005-2006** | **TARGET 2008-2009** | **Strategic Actions to achieve target** |
| An efficient complaint handling process | Percentage of investigations completed within 12 months of receipt of complaint. | 20% | 90% | - Monitor using computerized case management system.<br>- Recruit additional administrative support for Human Rights Officers<br>- Explore developing a team for addressing systemic discrimination complaints. |
| | Percentage of assessments completed within 4 weeks. | 30% | 95% | - Examine the impact of centralizing the intake function.<br>- Review time lines for intake and assessment process.<br>- Review allocation of staff resources to intake and assessment process. |

**Schedule 2**

| **Strategic Goal:** ***To promote efficient, effective and timely resolutions to complaints of discrimination.*** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OUTCOME** | **MEASURE** | **DATA 2005-2006** | **TARGET 2008-2009** | **Strategic Actions to achieve target** |
| Effective settlement initiatives which resolve individual allegations and reflect the public interest. | Success rate of cases which proceed to mediation | 70% | 85% | **- Recruit dedicated administrative support for mediation services.**<br>- Train staff to effectively identify cases appropriate for mediation.<br>- Evaluate settlement initiatives through feedback from participants.<br>- Complete the development of a framework for resolving complaints from aboriginal people with Dr. Fred Wien.<br>- Examine other forms of dispute resolution besides mediation.<br>- Training and development opportunities for members of the mediation roster to enhance understanding of human rights principles. |

**Schedule B**

| **Strategic Goal:** ***To promote systemic change by developing new tools and resources which support the Commission's mandate to educate organizations and individuals about the impact of discrimination.*** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OUTCOME** | **MEASURE** | **DATA 2005-2006** | **TARGET 2008-2009** | **Strategic Actions to achieve target** |
| Commission seen as an authoritative source for information about human rights. | Number of case studies published on an annual basis. | 0 | 2 | - Recruit a Senior Policy Analyst.<br>- Complete the case study on systemic discrimination with Dr. Marguerite Cassin.<br>- Develop the Commission's website as an interactive tool for learning. |
| | Number of special events co-sponsored with external organizations. | 5 | 10 | - Deliver annual address to Halifax Chamber of Commerce on the state of human rights in Nova Scotia.<br>- Improve contact with provincial chambers of commerce.<br>- Bring "Anne Frank in the World" exhibit to Nova Scotia in fall 2006.<br>- Identify two organizations to host a "Champions for the Workplace" event.<br>- Host "Day of Reflection" event at Province House. |

**Schedule 2**

| **Strategic Goal:** ***To help foster the development of a more equitable society and fair workplaces by pro-actively addressing discrimination in all its forms.*** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OUTCOME** | **MEASURE** | **DATA 2005-2006** | **TARGET 2008-2009** | **Strategic Actions to achieve target** |
| NSHRC seen as an expert in the fields of equity and managing inclusion | Percentage of training and consultation requests accepted. | 70% for Consults<br>50 % for Training<br>50% for Education | 90% for Consults<br>80% Training<br>80% Education | - Complete the recruitment of a permanent Human Rights Officer for the Race Relations & Affirmative Action Division.<br>- Recruit an administrative assistance for the Race Relations & Affirmative Action Division.<br>- Develop a strategic plan for delivery of training services.<br>- Augment the educational segments of the NSHRC website |
| | Number of positive evaluations from participants | 75% | 80% | - Review resources and professional journals to ensure facilitation and materials are state-of-the-art |

**Schedule 2**

| **Strategic Goal:** ***To help foster the development of a more equitable society and fair workplaces by pro-actively addressing discrimination in all its forms.*** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OUTCOME** | **MEASURE** | **DATA 2005-2006** | **TARGET 2008-2009** | **Strategic Actions to achieve target** |
| Public and private sector commitment to the values of Affirmative Action | Increase in the number of new Affirmative Action agreements | 0 | 3 (to total of 25) | - Implement new review process for existing affirmative action agreements.<br>- Profile successful Affirmative Action agreements. |
| | Increase the number of "Champions for the Workplace" breakfasts | 1 | 4 | - Create a communication plan to achieve better media coverage.<br>- Improve linkages with local Chambers of Commerce. |
| | Percentage of Affirmative Action agreements renewed within the 5 year standard | N/A | 50% | - Develop a strategic plan for renewing Affirmative Action agreements.<br>- Implement the Race Relations/Affirmative Action module of computerized case management system. |